

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

BRIGITTE STELZER

Plaintiff,

Docket No. 18-cv-2405

- against -

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

THE VILLAGE VOICE, LLC

Defendant.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Brigitte Stelzer (“Stelzer” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant The Village Voice, LLC (“Village Voice” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of Mindy LeGrand. The photograph is owned and registered by Stelzer, a professional photographer. Accordingly, Plaintiff seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides in and/or transacts business in New York.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

PARTIES

5. Stelzer is a professional photographer having a usual place of business at 22-39 74th Street, East Elmhurst, NY 11370.

6. Upon information and belief, Village Voice is a foreign limited liability company duly organized and existing under the laws of Pennsylvania with a place of business at 80 Maiden Lane, New York, New York 10038.

7. Upon information and belief, Village Voice is registered to do business in the State of New York.

8. At all times material hereto, Defendant has owned and operated the website at the URL: www.villagevoice.com (the “Website”).

9. Defendant is a for-profit entity.

10. Defendant publishes news content on the Website.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph

11. Stelzer photographed Mindy LeGrand (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

12. Stelzer then licensed the Photograph to the New York Post.

13. On July 25, 2010, New York Post ran an article that featured the Photograph entitled *Lying Nun Begs on Behalf of Unholy Rape Clan*.

14. Stelzer is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

15. The Photograph was registered with the U.S. Copyright Office and was given Copyright Registration Number VA 2-085-378, effective as of January 24, 2018 (the “378 Registration”). A true and correct copy of the 378 Registration, as it appears on the Copyright Office website, is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

B. Defendant’s Infringing Activities

16. On July 27, 2010, Defendant ran an article on the Website entitled *Lying Nun Exposed in Hysterical Pictures at the Post*. See

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2010/07/27/lying-nun-exposed-in-hysterical-pictures-at-the-post/> (the “Article”).

17. Defendant’s Article prominently featured the Photograph. Screenshots of the Article as it appears on the Website are attached hereto as Exhibit C.

18. Commercial advertisements on Defendant’s Website appear adjacent to, below or above the Photograph as displayed by the Article.

19. Defendant did not obtain a license from Plaintiff to display the Photograph on the Website.

20. Defendant did not have Plaintiff’s permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

21. Prior to publishing the Photograph on the Website, Defendant did not communicate with Plaintiff.

22. Subsequent to publishing the Photograph on the Website, Defendant did not communicate with Plaintiff.

23. Plaintiff did not discover Defendant’s infringement until 2017.

CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST VILLAGE VOICE)
(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)

24. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-23 above.
25. Defendant infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website.
26. Defendant is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.
27. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.
28. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Defendant have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.
29. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.
30. Defendant's conduct, described above, is causing, and unless enjoined and restrained by this Court, will continue to cause Plaintiff irreparable injury that cannot be fully compensated by or measured in money damages. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Village Voice be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. That Defendant Village Voice be ordered to remove the Photograph from the Website.
3. That Plaintiff be awarded Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph;
4. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
6. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York
March 19, 2018

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